



Unintentional Poisoning Injury Brief

Injury Prevention & Control Program

Overview of Fatal Injuries

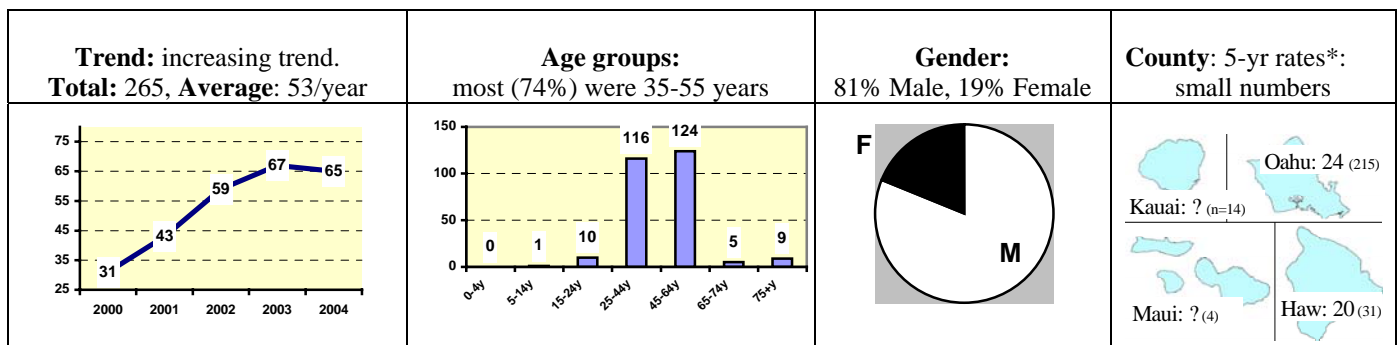
Annual crude rate (1999-2002): 3.5 deaths per 100,000 per year (5.0/100,000 for rest of U.S.)

Hawaii state ranking (1999-2002): 37th highest (NM highest: 12.9/100,000, RI lowest: 0.9/100,000)

Injury ranking (2000-2004): 4th leading cause of fatal injuries, 3rd leading cause of unintentional

There was a significantly increasing trend in the annual number of deaths coded as unintentional poisonings among Hawaii residents over the 2000-2004 period. This increase, an approximate doubling of the annual number, did not appear to be due to differential classification with suicidal poisonings or poisonings of undetermined intent. Most (74%) of the victims were 35 to 55 years of age, and most (81%) were males. Drugs and medicinal substances caused almost all (93%) of the poisonings. Altogether, more than half of the victims (57%) were males aged 35 to 55 years of age who were poisoned by drugs or medicinal substances. Narcotics and hallucinogens were the most commonly noted substances (35% of deaths), including heroin, cocaine and morphine.

Psychostimulants, which include amphetamine, and tranquilizers caused 22% of the deaths, and most of the remainder (35%) were coded as “other” or “unspecified” drugs.



*Unadjusted rates per 100,000 residents over the 2000-2004 period. The number of deaths is shown in parentheses.

Non-Fatal Injuries

For every Hawaii resident that is killed by a poisoning, there are 6 who are hospitalized and 13 who are treated in emergency departments. The age distribution of the patients was much more widespread than that among fatally poisoned victims, with by far the highest annual rates computed for residents under 5 years of age (202/100,000). This was mostly due to ED visits for infants and 1 year-olds. Children aged 5 to 14 years had the lowest rates (24/100,000). Gender was evenly distributed between males (53%) and females (47%), in contrast to victims of fatal poisonings, 81% of whom were male. Hospital charges averaged over \$3.6 million per year, not including physician charges, which may double the total charge.

Most (64%) of the poisonings were due to drugs and medicinal substances. Poisonings from psychotropic agents were the most common (18%), particularly those from benzodiazepine-based tranquilizers (7%). Other common poisonings were from heroin, methadone and other opiates (7%), aromatic analgesics (including acetaminophen, or Tylenol) (5%), cardiovascular agents (5%), anticonvulsants (165), and hormones (4%). The remaining 36% of non-fatal poisonings were due to the toxic effects of non-medical substances, most commonly by gas inhalation (8%), corrosives and caustics (6%), or toxicities in foods (5%).

The Hawaii Poison Center received nearly 7000 calls related to unintentional poisonings in 2003. In contrast to poisonings that require hospitalization, and especially fatal poisonings, a significant proportion reported to the Hawaii Poison Center involved very young children; almost half (47%) were poisonings among children aged 5 years or younger. Only 40% were calls for people aged 20 or over. About two-thirds of the calls came from people on Oahu, but the highest rates were computed for residents of Hawaii County (109 calls/10,000 residents). Kauai County had the lowest rates (82/10K). The causes of these poisonings were also very different from those that caused non-fatal hospitalizations, being mostly (77%) due to non-drug or non-medicinal substances. Bites and stings were the most common reason (18%) for the calls, followed by poisonings from cosmetics/personal care products (13%), analgesics (13%), and cleaning products (12%).

Youth Risk Factor Data

According to YRBSS, Hawaii high school students have greater access to illegal drugs at school (1995-2001 average prevalence: 37%), compared to all U.S. high school students (31%). There was also no trend in the proportion of students with access to illegal drugs, which decreased among all U.S. students. Self-reported access to drugs was higher among male students (1995-2001 average prevalence: 43%) in Hawaii, compared to female students (32%). Approximately 3% of Hawaii students reported using any form of cocaine in the previous 30 days, and 7% had used methamphetamine one or more times in their lives. Use rates were 4% and 9%, respectively, for all U.S. high school students.